CONTACT: Pam Jeane, Deputy Chief Engineer
(707) 521-1864
Mike Thompson, Deputy Chief Engineer
(707) 521-1863
Tim Anderson, Public Affairs
(707) 521-6208

**January 5, 2006**
For Immediate Release

## Water Agency assesses flood impacts on infrastructure

(Santa Rosa, CA) — Work is underway at this time to assess the impacts of the recent heavy rainfall and flooding on water supply, wastewater and flood protection systems around the county. "While most of the Sonoma County Water Agency's water infrastructure survived the storms intact, significant emergency maintenance work is required to prepare these systems for future storms" said Pam Jeane, Deputy Chief Engineer at the agency.

Flood water surrounded and isolated the agency's water collection facilities located on the Russian River near Mirabel and overtopped the levees surrounding infiltration basins at the facility. The levees were inundated and suffered some damage during the flooding, Jeane noted. Staff were able to operate the water supply systems remotely using automated systems and water supply for the region continued uninterrupted during the storms. The agency's water supply and transmission system delivers drinking water to over 570,000 people in Sonoma and Marin Counties.

Engineers closely monitored water levels at the two major dams in the Russian River watershed, Warm Springs Dam at Lake Sonoma and Coyote Valley Dam at Lake Mendocino. Lake

Sonoma held back about 60,000 acre-feet of water between December 28th and January 3 rising from a level 730 feet above sea level on December 18th to over 760 feet on January 1st. Lake Mendocino captured about 18.000 acre-feet of water between December 28th and December 31st rising from a level of 438 feet above sea level to 474 feet between December 18th and January 1st. Under current conditions both reservoirs are operated by the US Army Corps of Engineers as flood protection systems. More than 78,000 acre-feet of flood water was captured and held in these reservoirs during the New Year's storms.

Teams from the Sonoma County Water Agency surveyed storm impacts on the engineered stream channels that were designed to protect urban areas from flooding. "Most channels performed as expected under the extreme rainfall conditions over the weekend," said Mike Thompson, Deputy Chief Engineer. Temporary flooding did occur in some areas. Neighborhoods in the northern section of Rohnert Park and areas along Hinebaugh Creek and Copeland Creek experienced flooding according to Thompson. Chester Drive, located east of Rohnert Park, experienced flooding when a portion of Copeland Creek changed course.

Near record rainfall in the Rohnert Park area caused debris flow of gravel and sand from the nearby hills into the agency's flood protection facilities. The Cook Creek sediment basin and portions of the Cook Creek channel filled with gravel and sand and will require emergency dredging. High water flow and debris in Copeland Creek caused the stream to change course resulting in flooding in the Chester Drive area. Engineers are currently assessing maintenance actions to deal with Copeland Creek. Several other stream channels throughout Sonoma County will require emergency maintenance work including portions of Santa Rosa Creek.

Spring Lake served its purpose during the storms of retaining runoff helping to minimize flooding in Santa Rosa. Water levels in Spring Lake reached to the level of the secondary spillway but did not reach up to the primary spillway. Water discharge occurred over the secondary spillway releasing flow to Santa Rosa Creek but without significant impact on downstream areas. Matanzas Reservoir rose to within 4 feet of its spillway and will require maintenance this summer to remove debris and modify operation of the reservoir.

All of the wastewater treatment systems operated by the Sonoma County Water Agency continued to function during the storm events. However, sewer overflows were reported in the Sonoma Valley area and inflow to the Sonoma Valley treatment plant exceeded the plant's treatment capacity. Problems also occurred with sewage lift stations in Penngrove, Occidental and at the Russian River County Sanitation District.

Equalization basins at the Sonoma Valley County Sanitation District Treatment Plant reached capacity late on Monday and the plant was forced to discharge water treated to primary standards to the Schell Creek. The equalization basins have a storage capacity of 35 million gallons. The plant itself continued to operate at a capacity of about 10 million gallons per day throughout the period discharging water treated to secondary standards under permit requirements according to Jim Zambenini, the plant manager. The bypass flow from the plant ended early today when the facility resumed normal operation.

On Monday, January 2nd, agency teams were called in to repair and clean up sewer overflows caused by increased inflow to sanitary sewer systems at the Penngrove lift station and by a sewer pipeline blockage that occurred near Craig Road and Toy Lane in El Verano. The latest overflows follow a series of overflows that occurred in the Agua Caliente and Boyes Hot Springs

areas. Crews also worked around the clock over the weekend to pump and truck wastewater from the Occidental lift station to prevent serious overflows in Occidental.

"Storms of this magnitude put a lot of stress on employees who go out in hazardous conditions to solve problems and clean up spills," said Pam Jeane. Jeane noted that two employees worked several days straight at the Russian River Treatment Plant unable to get out of the facility due to high water and blocked roads. "We ask a lot of everyone under very difficult conditions and their attitude and performance has been excellent," Jeane said.

###

[Note: Agency damage estimated at $1.9 million as of 1/9/6.]